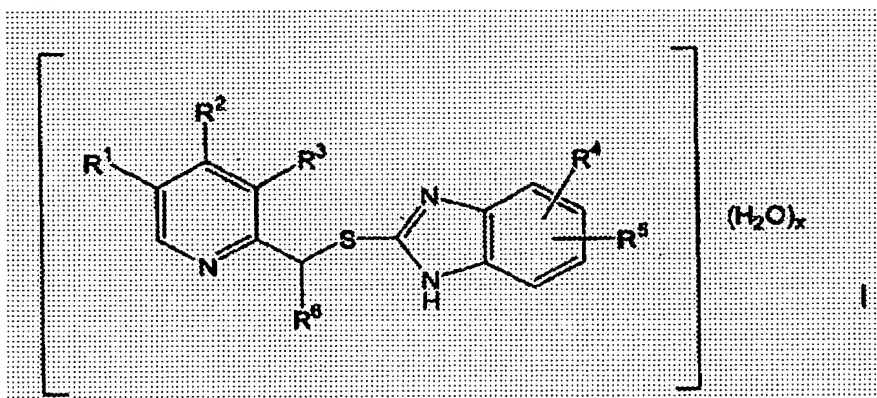


III. CLAIM AMENDMENTS

Please make the following changes to the claims:

1. (Currently Amended) Crystals of optionally substituted 2-(2-pyridinyl) methylthio-1H-benzimidazole hydrates of the following structural formula I



in which R¹, R² and R³, identical or different, denote hydrogen, a C1-C8 alkyl, C3-C8 cycloalkyl, C2-C8 fluoroalkyl or C1-C8 alkoxy residue,
R⁴ and R⁵, identical or different, denote hydrogen, a C1-C8 alkyl, C3-C8 cycloalkyl, CH₂-C3-C8 cycloalkyl, C1-C8 alkoxycarbonyl, C1-C8 alkoxy, C1-C8 fluoroalkoxy, CF₃-, C2-C8 fluoroalkyl or C(O)O-C1-C8 alkyl residue and
R⁶ denotes hydrogen or a C1-C2 alkyl residue and
x means 0.5-2.

2. (Original) Crystals according to claim 1,
in which R¹, R² and R³, identical or different, denote hydrogen, a C1-C3 alkyl or C1-C3 alkoxy residue,
R⁴ and R⁵, identical or different, denote

hydrogen, a C1-C3 alkoxy, C1-C3 fluoroalkoxy residue and R⁶ denotes hydrogen and x means 0.5-2.

3. (Currently Amended) Crystals according to ~~claim 1 or 2~~ claim 1, in which R¹ denotes a methyl group, R² a methoxy group, R³ a methyl group, R⁴ hydrogen, R⁵ a methoxy group in position 5 and R⁶ hydrogen and x means 0.5-2.

4. (Currently Amended) Crystals according to ~~claim 1 or 2~~ claim 1, in which R¹ denotes hydrogen, R² and R³ in each case denote a methoxy group, R⁴ denotes hydrogen, R⁵ a difluoromethoxy group in position 5 and R⁶ hydrogen and x means 0.5-2.

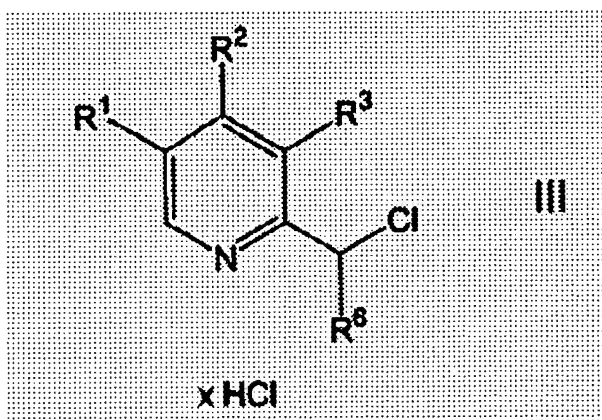
5. (Currently Amended) A process for the isolation of a compound according to ~~one of claims 1-4~~ claim 1 from a reaction medium containing the free base, characterised in that a water-soluble, organic solvent present in the reaction medium is at most partially removed, water is added to the reaction medium at a temperature of below 40°C water in quantities of at least 55 wt.%, relative to the reaction medium, and the hydrates formed are separated as crystals and optionally purified in conventional manner.

6. (Original) A process according to claim 5, characterised in that water is added in quantities of at least 70 wt.% relative to the reaction medium.

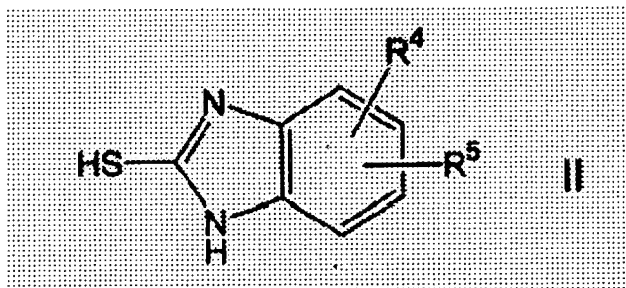
7. (Original) A process according to claim 5, characterised in that water is added in quantities of up to 75 wt.% relative to the reaction medium.

8. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~one of~~
~~claims 5-7~~ claim 5, characterised in that the water is added at a
temperature of 20-25°C.

9. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~one of~~
~~claims 5-8~~ claim 5, characterised in that an unhydrated compound
of the formula I was obtained in the reaction medium by reacting
a thiol-compound of the formula II



with a reactive pyridine compound of the formula III



in presence of at least one base, wherein the residues R¹-R⁶ have
the meaning stated in ~~one of claims 1-4~~ claim 1.

10. (Original) A process according to claim 9, characterised in
that sodium and/or potassium hydroxide was used as the base.

11. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~one of claims 5-8~~ claim 5, characterised in that the unhydrated compound of the formula I was initially dissolved in a water-miscible, organic solvent.

12. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~one of claims 5-11~~ claim 5, characterised in that the water-miscible, organic solvent is an aliphatic alcohol, preferably methanol, ethanol, propanol or butanol, or an aprotic solvent, preferably dimethylformamide, dimethyl sulf oxide, tetrahydrofuran, or a ketone, preferably acetone, or a mixture of at least two these solvents.

13. (Currently Amended) A process according to ~~one of claims 5-12~~ claim 5, characterised in that the crystals are purified by washing with water and/or a solvent/water mixture, preferably an alcohol/water mixture and/or a ketone/water mixture.